



What is wasting?

- ☛ Wasting is an unexplained weight loss of 10% or more of your normal body weight.
- ☛ Wasting can occur when you have chronic diarrhea for more than one month, or chronic weakness with fever for more than one month.

What causes wasting?

- ☛ Wasting can be caused by many factors, including social, economic, mental, emotional and physical.
- ☛ Wasting can be caused by either not taking in enough food (malnutrition) or not being able to absorb the nutrition from the food that is eaten (malabsorption).
- ☛ **Malnutrition** can be caused by:
 - an inability to afford food due to limited income
 - poor appetite due to depression, illness or side effects of medications
 - not having energy to shop for, prepare or cook food
 - a problem with chewing or swallowing due to gum or teeth diseases, or thrush or ulcers in the mouth or throat
 - a problem with keeping food down due to nausea and vomiting
 - feeling full after eating only a little because the stomach is not emptying the food properly



Canadian AIDS Treatment
Information Exchange
Réseau canadien
d'info-traitements sida

www.catie.ca



www.apaa.ca

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.

Wasting

- ☛ **Malabsorption** can be caused by:
 - infection in the stomach or bowels that causes the loss of their ability to absorb nutrients from food that is eaten
 - diarrhea due to infections in the stomach and bowels or due to side effects of medications

What are the symptoms of wasting?

- ☛ loss of more than 10% of your original body weight without trying
- ☛ loss of appetite
- ☛ nausea and vomiting
- ☛ diarrhea

How can wasting be prevented?

- ☛ good nutrition: talk to a dietitian or nutritionist who can give you advice on what kind of food to eat that will match your body's needs
- ☛ take additional vitamins or nutritional supplements
- ☛ exercise to build and strengthen your muscles may help prevent loss of body mass
- ☛ consult a physician and/or dentist when you experience symptoms that affect your appetite, eating or swallowing. They can help find out what caused the problems and start treatment early.

How can wasting be treated?

- ☛ Treatment should be based on the cause of the symptoms. Sometimes a combination of strategies is needed to help the problem.
- ☛ Ulcers and gum diseases can be treated with medications such as thalidomide
- ☛ Thrush can be treated with medications such as ketoconazole, fluconazole or itraconazole.
- ☛ Diarrhea can be treated with medications such as Imodium, Lomotil or somatostatin, or treating infections in the gut that cause diarrhea.



Wasting

- ☛ Appetite can be stimulated with medications such as Megace or Marinol.
- ☛ Weight gain can be stimulated with medications such as anabolic steroids or human growth hormone.
- ☛ In some cases, short-term or long-term feeding through a tube in the stomach or in a vein may be helpful for people with severe wasting.

Disclaimer: The Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) and Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA) in good faith provide information resources to help people living with HIV/AIDS who wish to manage their own health care in partnership with their care providers. Information accessed through or published or provided by CATIE or APAA, however, is not to be considered medical advice. We do not recommend or advocate particular treatments and we urge users to consult as broad a range of sources as possible. We strongly urge users to consult with a qualified medical practitioner prior to undertaking any decision, use or action of a medical nature.

We do not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any information accessed through or published or provided by CATIE or APAA. Users relying on this information do so entirely at their own risk. Neither CATIE, nor APAA, nor Health Canada, nor any of their employees, directors, officers or volunteers may be held liable for damages of any kind that may result from the use or misuse of any such information. The views expressed herein or in any article or publication accessed or published or provided by CATIE or APAA are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the policies or opinions of CATIE or APAA, or the official policy of the Minister of Health Canada.

Copyright: This Fact Sheet is made available through a collaboration between Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA), Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) and the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE). Original content developed by ACAS, 2001. Translation into Swahili and Hausa by APAA, 2004.

This information is also available in Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese

Funding has been provided by Health Canada, under the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS

Supported by an unrestricted educational grant from GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Shire BioChem



partnership
in partnership with

